



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

COVID-19 FAQs

Information for COUNTY RESIDENTS

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

For the latest information, go to [CDC COVID-19 website](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-19/).

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

Is there a vaccine or treatment?

There is currently no vaccine and no specific treatment for this disease. People infected with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

How can I help protect myself?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However you should follow these everyday actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-19/) has resources for handwashing education materials.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Cover** your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue use your elbow not your hands.
- **Clean** and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What do I do if I get symptoms of COVID-19?

- First, **call** your primary care provider and explain your symptoms and any recent travel history or close contact with someone who has.
- Before seeking health care **call ahead** to the facility and tell them your situation. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Stay home** when you are sick.
- **Cover** your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue use your elbow not your hands.
- **Clean** and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



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Q: What is a Persons Under Investigation (PUI)?

A: PUI is a person that has met specific criteria set by the CDC and is being monitored for disease.

Q: What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?

First, both Isolation and Quarantine are similar in that they are both imposed to limit the spread of communicable disease. The differences are as follows.

| Isolation | Quarantine |
|--|---|
| To separate ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who do not have that disease | To separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease |
| Restricts the movement of ill persons to help stop the spread of certain diseases | Monitor to see if they become ill |
| Example: Isolation for patients with infectious tuberculosis (TB) | These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms |
| There is no such thing as “self-isolation” or “self-quarantine”. Both of these tactics are imposed and enforced by the Erie County Department of Health. | |
| Source: hhs.gov | |

What cleaning products should I use?

You should use whatever antimicrobial products you use for your regular routine environmental cleaning. Ensure that they are EPA-registered and use according to the directions on the label.

Additional tips:

- Thoroughly and routinely clean frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, countertops, water fountains, etc. with the cleaners typically used.
- Use disposable wipes to wipe frequently touched surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls).

What should I do about travel plans?

This is a rapidly changing situation. Currently, the ECDOH is quarantining individuals for up to 14 days who travel from countries designated by the CDC as “Level 3.” Individuals who have travel plans outside the United States should consult the CDC web site for the most recent guidance. Travelers who return from a Level 3 country at this time should contact our Office of Epidemiology at (716) 858-7697.

Where can I find further information?

Use reliable, fact-based sources when seeking out information about COVID-19 and other public health topics. We recommend:

- Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH): erie.gov/covid19
- New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH): health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/coronavirus/